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POST-DISPATCH

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Hoodlum Is Killed In Car Bomb Blast

John Paul Spica, a convicted murderer and reputed hoodlum, was killed today when a bomb planted under his automobile exploded on Claytonia Terrace, a quiet residential street in Richmond Heights.

One policeman at the scene said it appeared that a bomb containing at least 10 sticks of dynamite had been placed beneath the car, which was parked in front of an apartment that Spica occupied with his girlfriend at 1115 Claytonia.

The bomb went off soon after 8 a.m., just instants after Spica got into his car, a black 1977 Cadillac coupe. He is believed to have been on his way to work at a produce stand that he operated at Shaw Boulevard and Vandeventer Avenue.

Spica had been mentioned last year in a House Assassinations Committee report as a possible link in the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Robin Ferretti, who lives at 1111 Claytonia, told the Post-Dispatch that she had walked down the sidewalk with Spica when they accidentally encountered each other on their way out the doors of their residences. Mrs. Ferretti said that her car was parked two autos behind Spica's and that she was behind it putting things in her trunk when the blast occurred. The open trunk lid shielded her from the force of the blast, she said.

George Ferretti, a brother-in-law of Mrs. Ferretti who lives at 1109 Claytonia, said he heard the bomb and ran outside. There he found Spica's body slumped in the driver's seat of the car, partly fallen out the open door.

The impact scattered wreckage over a broad area of the block, damaged other autos and shattered several windows, including one in the second-floor duplex apartment where Spica lived.

Police said Spica's girlfriend, Dina Bachelier, apparently was in the apartment at the time. Witnesses said she ran down to the street, sobbing hysterically, but then ran back upstairs.

When police arrived, she refused to answer the door, and officers had to enter the apartment by climbing up a ladder to an outside porch.

Miss Bachelier's automobile was parked across the street from Spica's, and police quickly checked it, too, for explosives before allowing anyone to get close to it.

Police said Spica's teen-age son arrived at the scene soon afterward and

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Bomb

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identified the body for authorities.

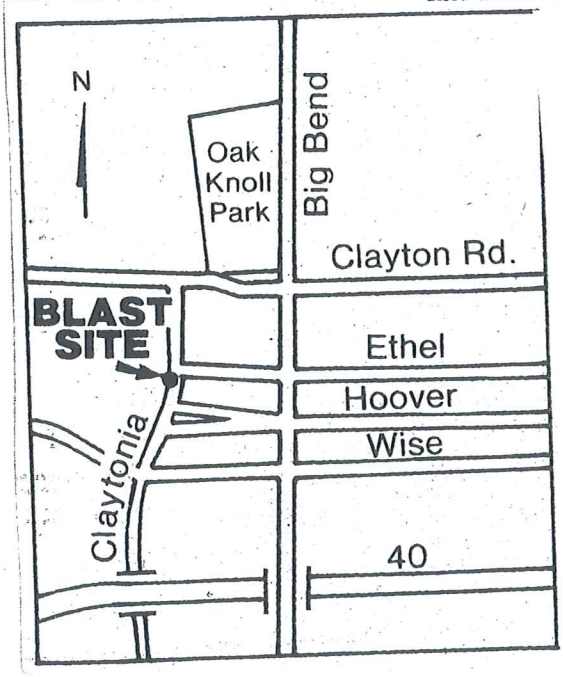
Spica, who was 42, had been mentioned in the House Assassinations Committee report last year as a possible — but unsubstantiated — link between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and James Earl Ray, King's convicted assassin.

Spica served a term for murder in the Missouri Peniteniary at the same time that Ray was there in the 1960s, and the House Assassinations Committee said it was possible that an offer to kill King had been transmitted through Spica to Ray. Spica was the brother-in-law of Russell G. Byers, a Rock Hill businessman who the committee said was reported to have received an offer of $50,000 for King's assassination.

Spica was convicted in the 1962 fatal shooting of John J. Myszak, a Normandy real estate dealer, who was shot down outside a friend's house. Spica was accused of arranging the killing after he was approached by Myszak's wife, Marie, who wanted her husband murdered.

Spica was sentenced to a life term, but was paroled in 1973.

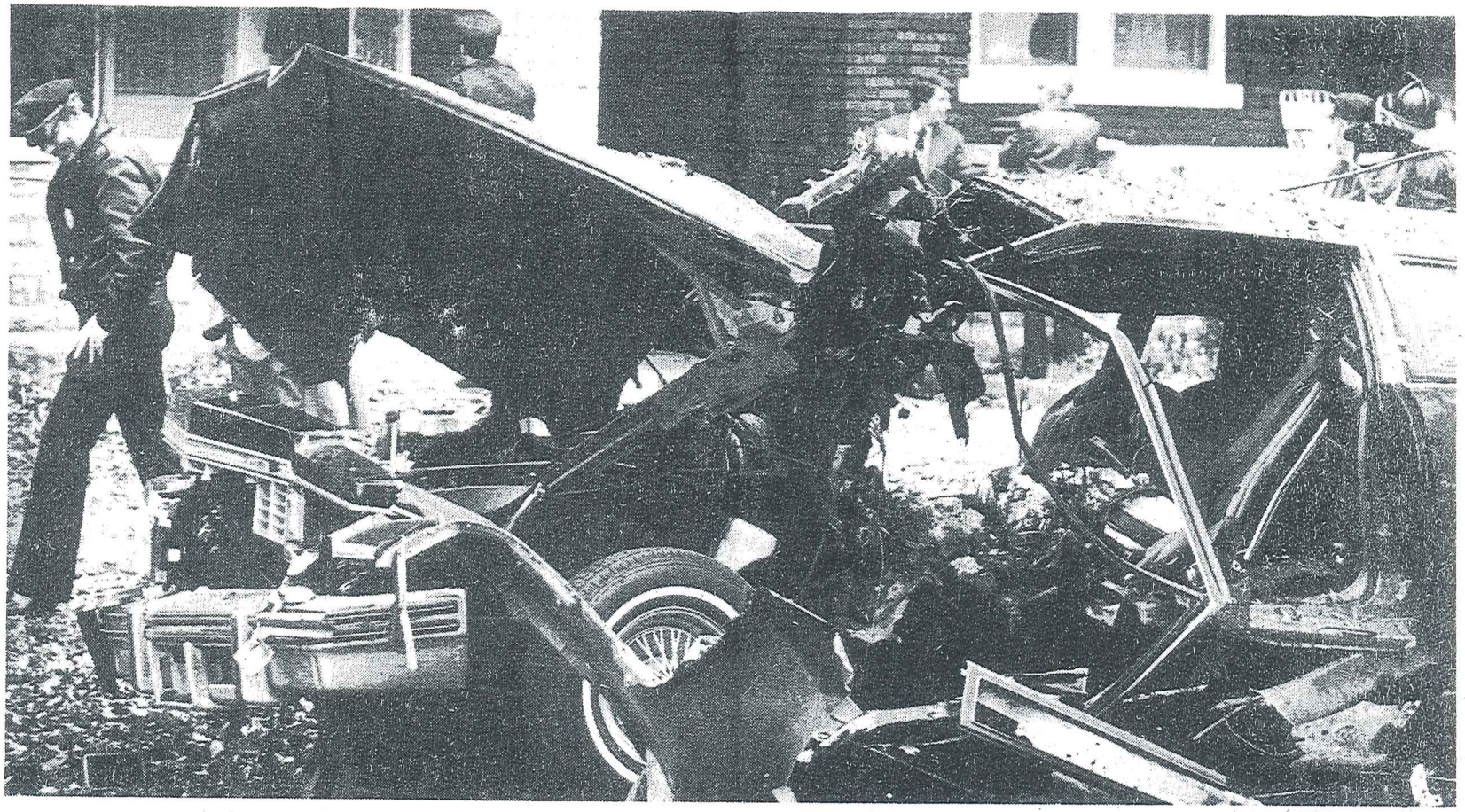
Spica's automobile bore Illinois license plates registered in the name of Glenn Spica of Springfield, Ill. Police said Miss Bachelier's automobile, a blue Buick, also carried Illinois plates and was registered to her at an address in East Carondelet, St. Clair County.



Neighbors said Spica and Miss Bachelier were quiet and had attracted no particular attention.

Ralph R. Anderson, Richmond Heights police chief, said his department was unaware of Spica's residence and had no reason to place him under surveillance.

(Information for this story was gathered by Ralph Williams, William Freivogel, Richard H. Weiss and John J. Hynes of the Post-Dispatch staff. It was written by Cleon Swayzee II.)



Larry Williams/Post-Dispatch

Death Car Police searching for evidence around the shattered wreckage of John Paul Spica's late-model Cadillac. Investigators said Spica was killed when a bomb, apparently placed under the seat of the car, blew up when Spica started the engine about 8 a.m.